

“TRIBAL AREA DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN INDIA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES”

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Abstract: Indian Tribes are the oldest inhabitants of India. In modern age these tribes are facing lots of challenges and problems for their survival. Their natural habitats, resources, customs, rituals and traditions are facing a danger of extinction. For their betterment and upliftment, Government of India started many projects and developmental programmes. But there are many hindrance and obstacles in the implementation of these programmes. In this study all the issues and challenges regarding the tribal area development programmes in India are discussed.

Key Words: Tribal Area; Development; Economic Measures; Scheduled Tribes; Barriers.

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Introduction: The Indian tribes have a symbolic relationship with the forests. Their customs, religious practices, social fabric and folklore have all been shaped by forests. They depend on forests for food, medicinal herbs and material to build houses, fuel for cooking as well as for lighting and warmth and fodder for their sustenance. Even in normal times, the roots, fruits and flowers substantially supplement tribal diet.

➤ **Size and Composition of Indian Tribes:**

The tribal population of Indian comes to about 104 million in 2011, which constitutes about 8.6 per cent of total population. This population comprises about 427 tribal communities.

They are at various levels of socio-cultural and economic development, belong to a number of linguistic and social groups, and are scattered all over the country. Most of them live in remote, hilly and forest areas and are at a low level of technological development. The common features that characterize the tribal groups are as follow:

- (i) They live away from the civilized world in the inaccessible parts lying in the forests and hills.
- (ii) They speak the same tribal dialect.
- (iii) They profess primitive religion known as 'Animism' in which the worship of ghosts and spirits is the most important element.
- (iv) They follow primitive occupations such as gleaning, hunting and gathering of farm products.
- (v) They are largely flesh or meat eaters.
- (vi) They have nomadic habits and a love for alcohol and dance.

However, during the last six decades under the impact of various developmental and promotional measures initiated to secure their integration with mainstream of the national social and economic life, the tribal scene has undergone a visible change. Presently, we can classify the various tribal communities as follows:

- (i) Tribal communities who are still confined to the aboriginal forest habitats and follow the old pattern of life.
- (ii) Semi-tribal communities who have more or less settled down in rural areas and have taken to agriculture and allied occupations.

- (iii) Cultured tribal communities who have migrated to urban areas and are engaged in modern industries and vocations and have adopted modern cultural traits.
- (iv) Tribal communities which are completely assimilated in the Indian population.

➤ **Programmes for Tribal Development:**

In the tribal development the following issues are significant:

- (a) The tribal areas are predominantly agricultural.
- (b) The economic development of these areas envisages increased agricultural production. The emphasis has, therefore, to be on introduction of improved and modern agricultural technology.
- (c) A major problem of tribal agriculture is that of inadequate provision of irrigation, the most important input for increasing agricultural production. The level of irrigation is extremely low in tribal areas, being less than 1 per cent. Most of the tribal areas situated in the upper reaches of the rivers and streams are left out from the areas to be benefited while planning major and medium irrigation projects.
- (d) Tribes have been associated with forests. During the off-seasons, these tribes will depend upon minor products of forests.
- (e) Credit and marketing facilities in the tribal areas are being adequately strengthened. Composite co-operative organizations such as LAMPS are being organized to channelize credit and to streamline marketing in the tribal areas.
- (f) To free the tribes from bondage of indebtedness, protective legislation has to be vigorously introduced.
- (g) In areas where Jhum cultivation is practiced necessary social services support given by the Government. Along with economic schemes are also being taken to improve sanitary conditions, drinking water facilities, education facilities in these tribal areas.

During the planning era there have been rigorous planning efforts and allocation of funds for the tribal development. Thus, while the Second Five-Year plan went for the forty-three experimental Special Multi-Purpose Tribal Blocks (SMPT), the Third Five-Year Plan Crystallized the approach to their development through the concept of Tribal Development Blocks with more funds and a systematic approach. By the Fourth Five-Year Plan period 43 per cent of the tribal population was covered under 504 Tribal Development Blocks. The Fifth Five-Year Plan

brought in the concept of sub-plan for tribal development with adequate funds both from the Centre and the state resources. During the Sixth and the Seventh Five-Year plans higher degree of devolution of funds through the Special Component Plan and through Special Central Assistance than in socio-economic development to give them occupational mobility and economic strength. Programmes will be designed in order to fulfil their minimum needs together with emphasis on the integration of different sectoral development programmes, with a clear recognition of their needs. Special attention will be given to assist this segment of the population to cross the poverty line. The schemes of welfare for the backward classes in the Eighth Plan will continue to lay emphasis on strengthening of the educational base of the SC/ST and other backward classes.

➤ **Economic Measures for the Upliftment of Scheduled Tribes:**

Efforts have been made since Independence to improve the condition of tribes. The following measures deserve our attention:

- (i) **Recognizing traditional rights to land:** Some States have enacted legislation to this effect. However, there is no uniform policy chalked out.
- (ii) **Legal protection against alienation of tribal land and the protection of tribes from moneylenders:** Legislation has been enacted in some States whereby land belonging to ST can be transferred only to other ST and that too with the prior permission. Similarly, various State measures have been instituted to put a stop to the exploitation of the tribes by moneylenders. However, available evidence suggests that the tribes prefer to take loans from private money lenders instead of cooperative societies, notwithstanding the lower interest charged by the later. The main reasons for the failure of the co-operatives have been (a) the co-operatives generally take too long to sanction the loans and have cumbersome procedures; and (b) the co-operatives do not give loans to landless people.
- (iii) **Distribution of land to the tribes and development of land already in their possession:** Surplus land released through imposition of ceiling on land holdings are distributed among tribals. Similarly, several schemes like provision of irrigation facilities, ploughs, bullocks, agricultural implements and distribution of improved seeds are in operation in order to help tribes improve the productivity of their land.

(iv) **Development of cottage industries:** The scheme also includes giving financial aid to the ST to set up or improve their own trade or business. Similarly commodities sold by tribals are purchased from them at various centers and the articles they need to sold to them at fair price shops.

(v) **Anti-poverty Programmes:** One of the highlights of the major anti-poverty measures is their focus on socio-economic-progress, particularly of the SC and ST. According to IRDP guidelines, minimum 30% of the beneficiaries covered should belong to SC/ST. Similarly, at least 30% of investment in terms of subsidy and credit is to flow to SC/ST. Under JRY, preference is to be given to SC/ST for employment. It is also envisaged that 6% of the funds received by the districts is set apart for Indira Aawas Yojana, a housing program for the poor and SC/ST on 100% subsidy basis. At the village panchayat level, 15% of the annual allocation should be spent on items/works which directly benefit SC/ST, under the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Program (ARWSP), emphasis is on coverage of SC/ST.

(vi) **Tribal Development Blocks:** Special multipurpose tribal development blocks have been established. The object of these blocks have been established. The object of these blocks is to bring about significant changes in the economic and social life of the tribals. However, they have covered a limited population and in several cases the schemes have been launched without any benchmark data.

➤ **Sub-Plan for Tribal Development:**

The concept of Sub-Plan for Tribal Development was introduced in the Fifth Five-Year Plan and continued in the subsequent Sixth, Seventh and the Eighth Five-Year Plans as a part of strategy for tribal development. Accordingly, areas having 50 per cent or more tribal concentrations were delineated and tribal sub-plans prepared in 19 States and Union Territories. These areas are grouped into 180 integrated tribal development projects as operational units. The States and Union Territories with predominant tribal population, namely Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Lakshadweep and Dadra and Nagar Haveli were not included in the tribal sub-plan approach as their state plans are, in fact, plans for the development of the tribal communities.

The broad objectives of the tribal sub-plan are:

- i) To narrow the gap between the level of development of tribal areas and other areas.
- ii) To improve the quality of the tribal communities.

In order to achieve these objectives, elimination of all forms of exploitation of tribals particularly in land, money lending, and malpractices, in the exchange of agricultural and forest products were given high priority. The tribal sub-plans envisaged total physical and financial efforts for integrated development of the tribal areas. The investment in the sub-plan flow from the State Plan, Central outlays from Central ministries and departments, institutional finance and special Central assistance. During the Eighth Plan, Central outlays from Central ministries and departments, institutional finance and special Central assistance. During the Eighth Plan, a total expenditure of about Rs. 1,110 crores was contemplated for the tribal sub-plan. It was proposed to extend economic assistance to 3,08,100 families during the plan period. The main objectives of the sub-plan include elimination of exploitation of tribes, infrastructure development, upgradation of environment of tribal areas and human resources development through education and training programmes.

➤ **Tribals And Finance:**

The tribals are faced with the problem of indebtedness and bonded labour. Tribals borrow money from moneylenders who charge them heavy rates of interest. Coupled with extreme poverty, heavy ritual expenses and drinking habits prompt them to borrow money from easily available and accessible sources. Indebtedness thus becomes a normal and unavoidable aspect of their existence. Various State measures have been instituted to put a stop to the exploitation of the tribals by moneylenders. For instance, a number of co-operatives have been opened in various State to advance loans to the tribals at nominal interest.

Available evidence suggests that tribals prefer to take loans from private moneylenders instead of co-operative societies notwithstanding the lower interest charged by the later. The main reasons for the failure of the co-operatives have been:

- i) The co-operatives generally take too long to sanction the loans and have cumbersome procedures.
- ii) The co-operatives do not give loans to landless people.

The Government of India appointed a "Study Team on Co-operative Structure in Tribal Development Project Areas" under the chairmanship of Shri K.S Bawa in 1973, to indicate a suitable institutional structure for development of tribal communities. The study team recommended that LAMPS should be organized in tribal areas on the lines of Farmer's Service Societies (FSS) providing all types of credit (short, medium and long-term) including credit for meeting consumption needs, their agricultural and consumer goods requirements ; providing technical guidance for modernization of their agriculture and arrange marketing of their agriculture and minor forest products. In pursuance of this, the LAMPS and the PACs were reformed at the primary level to serve as multi-purpose organization for the benefit of tribals. The LAMPS and the PACs are federated at the State level to form the Tribal Development Co-operative Corporations (TDCCs)/ Federations. So far 10 co-operative corporations /federations have been organized at the State level. The TDCCs have been organized in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Orissa, West Bengal, Manipur and Tripura. The State Level Tribal Co-operative Federations have come into being in Kerala and Rajasthan. These TDCCs have been rendering very useful service to the tribals.

In the absence of national federation of tribal co-operative corporation/federations, the National Agricultural Co-operative Marketing Federation (NAFED) at the national level has set up a Tribals cell to extend marketing/technical intelligence and other support to the State Level Tribal Development Co-operative Federations.

Continuous efforts are being made by the State to put a stop to the exploitation of the money lenders, for indebtedness leads to the problem of bonded labour. The banking system, along with co-operatives, has to evolve banking procedures to suit the needs of the tribals, as it is doing for other weaker sections of society.

➤ **Scheduled Tribes Finance Corporation:**

In 1988-89, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation was set-up. This Corporation will play a critical role in developing schemes for employment generation and financing pilot programmes which can then be taken up by the State level corporations and other agencies active in this field. This corporation will also work with CBs and

NABARD in improving the flow of financial assistance to the SC and ST. The objective would be to innovate, experiment and promote rather than duplicate the work of existing agencies. This corporation has an authorized capital of Rs. 75 crores with a paid -up capital of Rs. 50 crores to be fully subscribed by the government.

➤ **Problems in Tribal Area Development Programmes:**

In spite of concrete efforts made during the last six decades, there has not been much change in the socio-economic condition of tribals. The reason for the limited success can be identified as the planner's narrow concentration upon the technical problem of tribal development to the partial exclusion of other factors which are essentially non-economic, but human in nature.

The various barriers faced by tribals in adoption of agricultural innovations can be grouped as follows:

i) Education barriers: These include ignorance of improved practices, lack of knowledge regarding these, or having wrong knowledge of the practice, etc.

ii) Economic barriers: These include higher cost of improved agricultural practices, lack of money to purchase required requisites, poverty, etc.

iii) Social-cultural barriers: Social barriers pertain to the farmer's in the social system use the same. Cultural barriers are related to different cultural values which come in the way of adoption of agricultural innovation, e.g.

a) High yield entirely depends upon God's will rather than use of improved seeds or fertilizers.

b) Fertilizers destroy the fertility of the soil.

c) To kill insects is to suffer the gnawing of remorse.

d) Diseases of plants are nothing but an astonishing events of nature and fight against these 'events' is to suffer the gnawing of compunction, etc.

iv) Practical barriers: These include the susceptibility of improved varieties of fertilizers and pesticides, lack of irrigation facilities after the application of fertilizers, major portion of the applied fertilizers leached away as the fields are located on stiff slopes of hills, and dusters and sprayers are not available on time.

As stated earlier, tribals area at different levels of socio-cultural and economic development and thus have different problems. The tribes which are in food gathering and hunting stage have altogether different problems from those who practice shifting cultivation. Similarly, the later have different problems from those who are settled agriculturists. An integrated approach to development suited to varied need at different phases needs be evolved and implemented.

➤ **Shifting Cultivation:**

Shifting cultivation in India is practiced by the Scheduled Tribes of the hilly and forest tracts. According to the latest information available on the extent of shifting cultivation in the country, an approximate 10.26 lakh hectares of land are under the system with a population of 36,170 depending on it. It is mainly concentrated in N.E India accounting for about half the total population practicing it. It is also found in the belt comprising Odisha, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.

Shifting cultivation is on the way out in many States due to its inherent characteristics, one of them being primitive technology and low carrying capacity. It can, at best maintain 20 persons per square km. Almost all areas under shifting cultivation except Arunachal Pradesh in India have crossed that critical stage.

Conclusion: So it is found that in spite of some serious and honest efforts of both, the states and the center government, tribal area programmes are not providing maximum results. These programmes are facing grass roots implementation problems. But it does not mean that these programmes are a failure. Due to such programmes many tribal communities of India improve their economic, educational, social and cultural status. Due to such programmes mainstreaming and channelization of scheduled tribes took a leap forward. By strengthening of the weaknesses of tribal area programmes the objective of their existence in modern world can be achieved.

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